



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 15, 2004

Mr. James L. Hall
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2004-0346

Dear Mr. Hall:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 194315.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for information relating to the selection of an applicant for a specified law librarian position. You claim that portions of the requested information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.117 and 552.122 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.122(b) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure test items developed by a licensing agency or governmental body. In Open Records Decision No. 626 (1994), this office determined that the term "test item" in section 552.122 includes any standard means by which an individual's or group's knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated, but does not encompass evaluations of an employee's overall job performance or suitability. Whether information falls within the section 552.122 exception must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6 (1994). Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122 where release of "test items" might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976). Additionally, when answers to test questions might reveal the questions themselves,

¹We assume the department has released the remainder of the requested information to the requestor. If not, you must do so immediately. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.006, .301, .302; Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000) (concluding that section 552.221(a) requires that information not excepted from disclosure must be released as soon as possible under the circumstances).

the answers may be withheld under section 552.122(b). *See* Open Records Decision No. 626 at 8 (1994).

You contend that the submitted interview questions and responses are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. After reviewing the information, we agree that interview questions 2 through 8 test an individual's knowledge in a particular area and thus constitute "test items" as contemplated by section 552.122(b). Accordingly, the department may withhold interview questions 2 through 8, and the corresponding responses, pursuant to section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. We find, however, that question 1 is not a test item for purposes of section 552.122. Thus, the department may not withhold question 1 or the submitted responses corresponding to question 1 pursuant to section 552.122 of the Government Code.

We next consider your claim under section 552.117 of the Government Code. Section 552.117(a)(3) excepts the home address and telephone number, social security number, and family member information of current or former employees of the department. You indicate that the social security numbers you have highlighted in the submitted documents pertain to current or former department employees. We agree that the department must withhold the social security numbers of current or former employees pursuant to section 552.117(a)(3) of the Government Code. We note, however, that the requestor has a special right of access to her own social security number pursuant to section 552.023. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023 (a person has a special right of access to information that is excepted from public disclosure under laws intended to protect that person's privacy interest as the subject of the information). Thus, the requestor's own social security number may not be withheld under section 552.117(a)(3) and must be released to the requestor.

In summary, the department may withhold the submitted questions and responses for interview questions 2 through 8 pursuant to section 552.122 of the Government Code. With the exception of the requestor's social security number, the department must withhold social security numbers of current or former department employees in the submitted documents pursuant to section 552.117(a)(3) of the Government Code. The remainder of the submitted information must be released to the requestor.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.*

§ 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



David R. Saldivar
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DRS/seg

Ref: ID# 194315

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Brenda G. Alexander
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(w/o enclosures)